

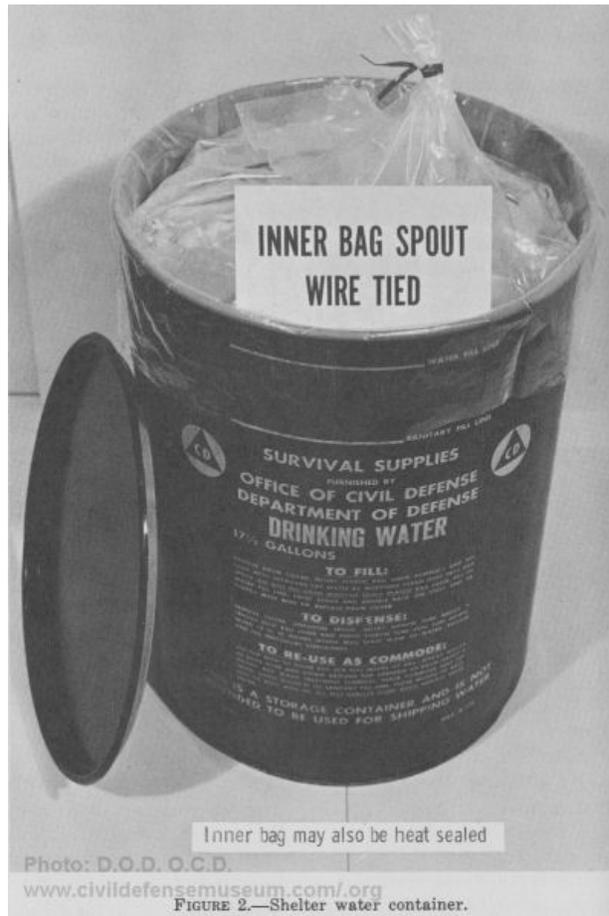


Civil Defense Fallout Shelter Water Containers

Community Shelter Supplies

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This photo shows the standard 17.5 gallon shelter water container from the Civil Defense/Red Cross book on Emergency Mass Feeding. This standard shelter water container was a steel barrel that had 2 plastic liners inside and stood 22 inches tall and was 16 inches in diameter. The center plastic liner is the actual water container and the outer liner is a backup. The liners were either tied or heat sealed closed. This method of storing water does seem a bit complicated in today's plastic-container-filled world but keep in mind that this was back before large plastic containers were in common use. The plastic liner/metal water can did hold up fairly well though. I saw a few shelters back in the late 1980s with hundreds of these drums and didn't see any that were leaking. However, when the liners did leak, the steel barrels wouldn't last long before they would begin rusting.

Click photos to see larger.

According to the FY 1966 Dept. of Defense, Office of Civil Defense Annual Report, 10,039,929 water containers were purchased.

The original shelter water containers were fiberboard drums like the sanitation kits. I have never managed to locate one though. **See photo below.**

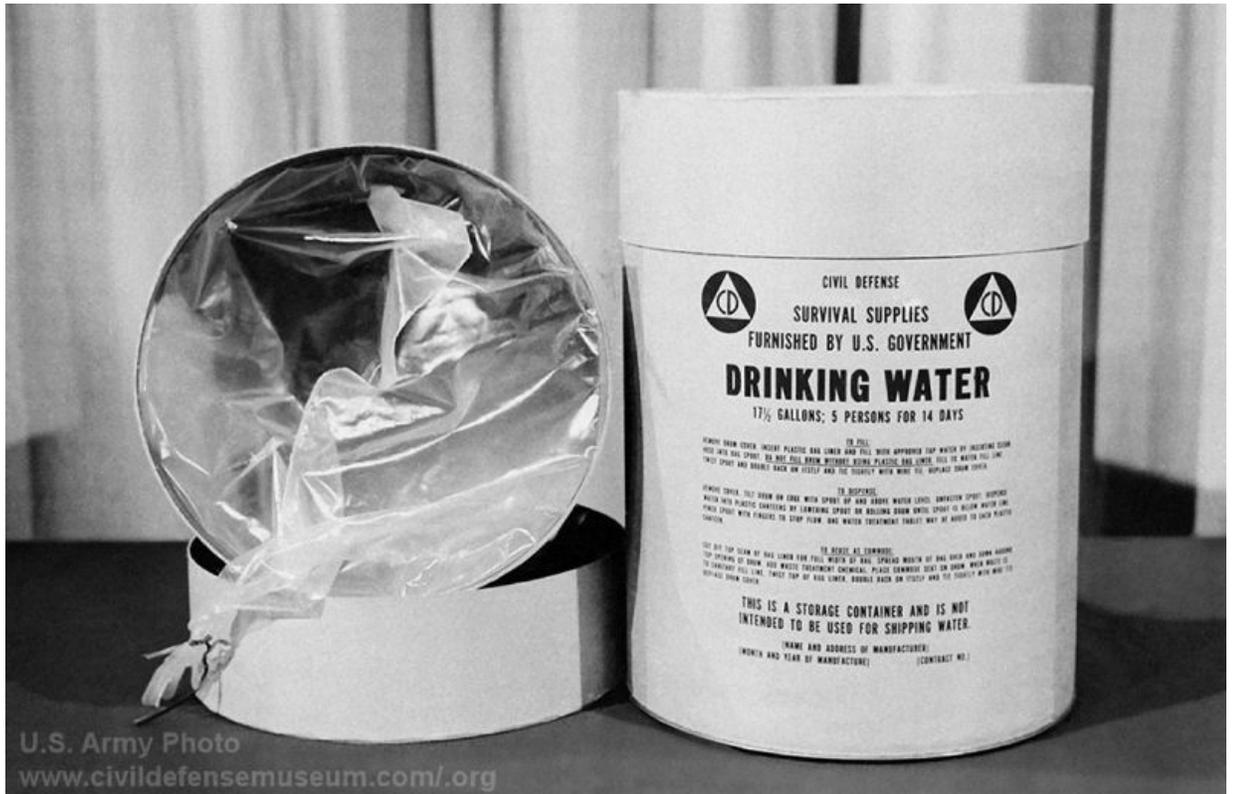


Table 1-Storage-life of water containers.

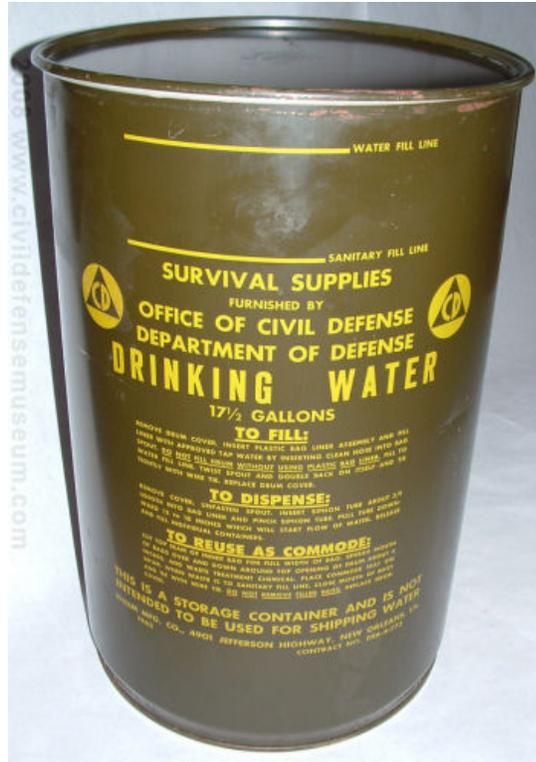
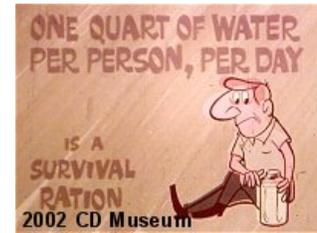
Component	Storage Life		
	Normal Storage	Adverse Storage (1)	Poor Storage (2)
	(years)	(years)	(years)
Liners, 4-mil polyethylene	10+	5-8	2-3
Metal drum	10+	5-8	2-3
Metal drum in direct contact with water, in and outside	1.5-3	1.5-3	1.5-3
(1) Indicates materials stored in basements, underpasses, igloos, and similar locations, generally below ground, where temperature, humidity, and housekeeping may be less desirable than expected for normal storage.			
(2) Indicates materials stored in locations such as mines, caves, and railroad tunnels exposed to saturated air, condensate, dripping water, and dust, on a seasonal basis.			

Federal Civil Defense Guide Part D, Chapter 2, Appendix 1, Annex 1, December 1965

Polyethylene Liners

Polyethylene liners were used in the steel water containers so they would hold water. Liners came in packages of 20 double-bag liners, an instruction sheet and a bag of twist-ties. The liners were usually packed in flat boxes but this set was found in a shelter simply rolled up. See description of bags above. **Click photo to see larger.**





Here are a couple of photos of water barrels from my collection. The barrel label color seems to vary between white, yellow and orange depending on the contractor who manufactured the barrel. Some of the contractor names I have seen on barrels are Rheem Mfg. New Orleans LA, U.S. Steel Sharon PA, Southline Metal Houston TX, Malleable Iron Range Co. Beaver Dam WI, and Cincinnati Galvanizing Co. OH. to name a few. The photo on the right shows the plastic bag liner installed and ready to fill with water. **Click Photos To See Larger.**
Click photo to see much larger.

Fiberboard Water Containers

I received this amazing photo via e-mail a while back but I can't remember who sent it to me. I have no idea where this is. Obviously it's hundreds of the original fiberboard shelter water containers. I wish I had some info on the photo. I might need permission to put it up but usually with these old photos it doesn't matter so that's why I put it up on the site. If anyone sees this and knows where the photo came from please let me know. **Click photo to see larger.**



Here's an interesting photo that was found in the National Archives. This photo was sent to me by Dave Monteyne who did some digging through the National Archives at College Park, Maryland in November 2004 while researching his book [Fallout Shelter: Designing For Civil Defense In The Cold War](#). Thanks Dave!

The date on the photo is 1963. Notice that the man is filling the bottom layer of the second row from the wall and that the barrels are standing on wooden strips to keep them off the floor. Also visible at the far left of the photo is a stack of sanitation kits in the background. Wonder how many barrels he ended up filling with water here. Heck, the things might still be there today. There is a note on the photo about "Social Security Administration Building" but there is no location given other than that. **Click the photo to see a larger version.**



Documents Referenced

Federal Civil Defense Guide Part D, Chapter 2, Appendix 1, Annex 1, December 1965

Instructions For Filling Civil Defense Water Containers DOD- OCD

Basic Course In Emergency Mass Feeding Handbook, DOD-OCD, American National Red Cross August 1966